

Observing Group Process

While working with any group it is helpful to also observe the process at work within the individual members of the group. It is through carefully attending to the situation and individual behaviors that we can observe subtle indicators of interpersonal dynamics. The following is a list of a few of the primary dynamics that are observable as groups work together.

1. HOW ARE PEOPLE SITTING?

- Are they in a neat circle, or are some sitting back from the group?
- Are they leaning forward attentively, or are they slouching, sprawling, or leaning back?

2. HOW ARE PEOPLE PARTICIPATING?

- Are a few doing all of the talking or is participation balanced?
- Are people lively, animated, or lethargic and inattentive?
- Is everyone focused on what is happening, or are side conversations taking place?
- Are people "passing" when attempts are made to draw them into the activity?
- Are consistent "subgroups" frequently breaking off from the group?

3. HOW ARE PEOPLE TAKING CARE OF ONE ANOTHER?

- Are they listening to one another?
- Are "put downs" or teasing happening? If so are they being confronted by other group members?
- Are disagreements being resolved in satisfying ways?
- Are kindness and cooperation being demonstrated?
- Is the group making efforts to draw in any withdrawn members?

4. HOW ARE PEOPLE FEELING AND BEHAVING?

- Are people's faces animated with feeling in response to the conversation?
- Is there evidence of group member engagement in the process?
- Are people affirming and accepting of one another?
- Is your natural response one of warmth and relaxation toward all members of the group?

5. IS THE GROUP WORKING WELL ON THE GIVEN TASK?

- Who has assumed a leadership role? Are all participating and sharing in the leadership role in an appropriate manner?
- Are all persons included in the task?
- Does the group seem mindful of the goal of completing the task without sacrificing the goal of cooperation, assimilation, and inclusion?

6. WHAT IS HAPPENING WITHIN YOU AS AN OBSERVER?